

### **Statue of Amida Buddha**

The Ho'unden hall of Shoboji Temple houses a large statue of Amida, the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life. Amida is portrayed seated in the lotus position with a serene expression, both hands held in front of the chest in a symbolic gesture (mudra) of teaching. The statue was carved in the Kamakura period (1185–1333) and is a nationally designated Important Cultural Property.

The statue measures 2.8 meters in height and is made of Japanese cypress. Amida's body was once covered with gold leaf on lacquer, and the robes were colorfully painted. The halo (4.8 m) features 13 small Buddhist images, curling clouds, and other decorative elements, and still bears traces of gold foil. The statue does not have the creator's signature, but based on its style researchers suggest that it could be the work of Kaikei, a renowned Kamakura-period sculptor.

This statue of Amida is one of the rare surviving Buddhist sculptures from the long period when Iwashimizu Hachimangu was a shrine-temple complex practicing syncretic Shinto and Buddhist worship. The statue was originally enshrined at a vermilion octagonal hall called Hakkakudo within the complex. However, when the Meiji government ordered the separation of Shinto and Buddhism in 1868, all Buddhist-related objects had to be removed from Iwashimizu Hachimangu. To save Hakkakudo and the statue, a retired chief abbot of Shoboji had them moved to another location atop an ancient burial mound near the temple in 1870. In 2008, the statue of Amida was transferred to Shoboji's Ho'unden hall, which was built for its protection and preservation.